



Congressman Tim Bishop

FIRST DISTRICT -- NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BISHOP URGES RECONSIDERATION OF COAST GUARD PROPOSAL

CORAM, NY - In a letter to United States Coast Guard Commandant Thomas Collins, the highest ranking Coast Guard official, Congressman Tim Bishop expressed his strong opposition to the proposed realignment of the Coast Guard's Group Moriches, based in Moriches, Long Island.

The Coast Guard is currently consolidating bases throughout the nation. However, Bishop believes that relocating Search and Rescue (SAR) Command functions from Group Moriches is a mistake that could potentially endanger the lives of Long Island's fishermen, pleasure boaters, and the crews of the many shipping vessels along the coastal Atlantic and Long Island Sound. The unique coastal geography of Long Island's South Shore and the specialized needs of residents and visitors makes the kind of consolidation proposed by the Coast Guard a risky proposition.

This is the second letter that Bishop has authored making the case for Group Moriches. Bishop personally handed a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff in October.

The following is the most recent letter:

December 2, 2005

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, DC 20593-0001

Dear Admiral Collins,

I am writing to express my concerns about the Coast Guard's ongoing sector realignment process on Long Island. As you move forward with the implementation of the Coast Guard's plan, I respectfully request that you re-assess the proposed transfer of search and rescue (SAR) command functions, including 14 positions, from Group Moriches, based in Moriches, New York to other areas including Long Island Sound Sector Command in New Haven, Connecticut.

I am aware that many changes are already underway to consolidate command functions at the

Long Island Sound Sector Command. I am also disappointed that my constituents and local public officials were not adequately notified or given the opportunity to express their concerns in response to this restructuring. Furthermore, I respectfully disagree with your view that this plan would not weaken the Coast Guard's mission or capability on the South Shore of Long Island.

I am particularly concerned that removing SAR command from Long Island could compromise safety, and undermine the excellent relationships developed between the local community and controllers at Group Moriches, which - combined with the Guard's knowledge of the terrain - are vital to quick, successful rescues. Indeed, the former Group Moriches is renowned for its effectiveness, its familiarity with the South Shore's unique geography, and its impeccable record of performance in the most harrowing of situations. By removing command from Long Island, the Coast Guard will not retain the flexibility necessary to coordinate SAR operations along the South Shore in the event of certain emergencies. As such, my district's constituents as well as nearby vessels and boaters will essentially be rendered 'out of sight, out of mind.'

Accordingly, I encourage you to implement a strategy to provide Moriches the discretionary authority to immediately coordinate SAR operations depending on the nature of the emergency. I would also appreciate your assurances that the Captain of the Port and his senior staff will maintain a frequent physical presence on Long Island. I also hope you agree that during such large-scale restructuring, it is important to maintain close contact with and solicit input from residents and elected officials.

Therefore, I request that you convene a meeting on Long Island with local officials, emergency services and other concerned parties, at your earliest convenience, to discuss this plan and address questions from the community. Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Timothy Bishop
Member of Congress

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